

NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

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THE KENTISH PLOVER, CHARADRIUS ALEXANDRINUS  
LINNAEUS, BREEDING IN SOUTHERN MADRAS

By

Stewart Melliush

So little appears to be known of the breeding habits of some of the commoner but less conspicuous birds resident in India that the following record may be of interest.

Two races of the Kentish Plover, Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus and C. a. seebohmi, are known to be resident in the Indian area. The former's range is defined by Ripley thus, 'Breeds in West Pakistan in Sind, and India in Kutch and Saurashtra (subspecies ?), south in winter throughout the Peninsula, Nepal in the terai, and Ceylon', while seebohmi is regarded as a Ceylonese race, though Salim Ali (THE BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE & COCHIN, 1953) says 'it may possibly be found to breed in Travancore also'. Except for this last conjectural statement, I can find no published mention of the breeding of either race in southern India.

Kentish Plovers are common on the coast of Madras at most times of year, but the first hint I received that they might breed was after Zafar Futehally and I had watched a small plover,

which I had carelessly dismissed as a Lesser Sand Plover, performing wing- and tail-drooping and other decoying antics in some plough at Velacheri, a few miles south of Madras city, on 8 February 1964. Mr. Futehally later referred to Henry's GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF CEYLON, where, at page 291, there is an admirable description of the behaviour we had witnessed. We concluded that the bird seen was a Kentish Plover, but as birds in breeding condition will perform ritual acts of this kind whether they are actually breeding or not, we could not assume it was nesting.

In early May 1964, at Sadras in Chingleput district, I found a plover fledgling, which could not fly and which I was thus able to pursue and photograph at short range. A very worried adult Kentish Plover was present to witness this performance, and to confirm the fledgling's identity. Later the same day close by I saw two more adult Kentish Plovers frantically trying to decoy me away from what I could only suppose were young similar to the one I had just seen, or nests. Their tactics were successful.

I have now found a Kentish Plover's nest. I was at Kodikkarai (better known as Point Calimere) in Tanjore district on 14 January 1966, walking along the shore about a mile west of the railway station, when an adult Kentish Plover in very smart livery attracted my attention by running along the sand in front of me in a crouching posture with its wings drooping and its tail fanned out and pressed downwards. Every now and then it stopped and changed its directions, and occasionally assumed a more upright stance, folding its wings in the normal manner. After a long and tiring day plodding through the mud, and with sundown approaching, I did not feel in the least like hunting for eggs or a fledgling which might after all be purely imaginary. I had just resolved to walk on when I looked down and saw three eggs in the sand at my feet.

These were a matt khaki, blotched all over with sepia, the blotches a trifle denser at the broader ends. In shape they resembled chicken's eggs, the one I measured was approximately 32 by 22 cm. in size. They lay with their narrow ends inwards and downwards in a hollow in the sand about four inches in diameter, lined and surrounded by an untidy array of bits of broken shell. I saw no sign of an attempt to cover the eggs with fragments of shell and mud, such as Henry describes. A few tufts of grass grew round about the depression, but offered no protection to the nest in any way. The nest was 33 feet from the high-water line.

Throughout my examination of this nest the adult bird was silent, and I did not see it again; nor, it will be realised, did I see it approach or sit on the nest, but the chances of the eggs belonging to a different bird or species are, I believe, very remote. The eggs were warmer to the touch than pieces of mollusc shell lying near them and a sitting bird had clearly left them only a moment before I found them.

Calimere is a mere thirty miles from the end of the Jaffna peninsula, and it is possible that the birds there are seebohmi. What seems odd is the early date. Henry wrote, 'The breeding season lasts from about March till August, but June and July appear to be the favourite months'.

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THREE WEEKS OF BIRDWATCHING IN RANIKHET  
IN AUTUMN

BY

Usha Ganguli

Ranikhet with a height of a little over 6000 ft. is a very well-wooded hill station comprising mostly Himalayan Oak, Pine, Horse Chestnut, a few Deodar, Eucalyptus and wild Cherry Trees. The eucalyptus and the wild cherry trees came into flower while I was there in Oct.-November, and the wild rose and some viburnum and other bushes were laden with ripe fruit and berries, and thus attracted a large variety of birds. I saw nearly sixty varieties of birds of which nine were new to me and two of them remain unidentified to this day.

The biggest surprise for me was the presence of a stork wheeling high in the air with vultures. It had black wings with white triangular patches at the 'shoulders', a white body, whitish tail, long trailing legs and a large dark neck. I made a sketch and comparing this later with Peterson's FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND EUROPE I realised that it was a Black Stork, Ciconia nigra, migrating over the Himalayas.

The kite was seldom seen. The Hawk Eagle, Spizaetus species, was seen on three occasions each time chivvied by Jungle Crows which were abundant even at this season. One or two Steppe Eagles, Aquila nipalensis soared now and then with vultures, but on November 10, just before lunch, I saw 22 of them within a period of 20 minutes flying from North-east in a westerly direction. They were certainly migrating.

Five species of vultures were present, Pondicherry, Torgos calvus, Himalayan Griffin, Gyps himalayensis, Whitebacked, Gyps bengalensis, Egyptian, Neophron percnopterus, and the Bearded, Gypaetus barbatus. The Himalayan Griffin and the Egyptian vultures were more commonly seen. The only falcon present was the Kestrel, Falco tinnunculus, seen on a few occasions. Once two of them came into the hotel compound, one sat on the top of a deodar tree and called, spreading its wings and tail now and then.

I heard the Rufous Turtle Dove, Streptopelia orientalis, once but did not see it. A single Spotted Dove, Streptopelia chinensis, was seen on two occasions at Bhatrojkan (5200 ft.) eighteen miles from Ranikhet.

A flock of Slatyheaded Parakeets, Psittacula himalayana, were seen and heard at Almora.

At Bhatrojkan I saw a solitary swift uniformly dark below which I was unable to identify. Glaucidium cuculoides, the West Himalayan Barred Owlet was seen both at morning and sundown and allowed a close approach. I watched one sitting on a stump only 20 ft. away. It had rather short wings which did not reach even halfway down the barred tail though the illustration in Salim Ali's HILL BIRDS shows the wings reaching beyond the tail. The musical double note of the Spotted Scops Owl, Otus spilocephalus was heard on most nights.

The Great Himalayan Barbet, Megalaima virens, is a resident bird. I saw one catching a beetle.

The Spotted Piculet, Picumnus innominatus, in spite of its diminutive

size made quite a noise while tapping at trees for insects. I only saw females. I have never seen a male though once I watched a female feeding its young at a nest hole, but the male did not appear as long as I watched.

Six species of woodpeckers were present of which the Rufousbellied Hypopicus hyperithrus was new to me. A pair was seen on October 27 and 9 days later, presumably the same pair was found in practically the same area. This woodpecker, though larger than the Brownfronted Woodpecker makes a very feeble noise while digging for insects under barks of trees, perhaps because of its comparatively slender bill. This one was a very silent bird. The West Himalayan Pied Woodpecker, Dendrocopos himalayensis; the Brownfronted Woodpecker, Dendrocopos auriceps; and the Scalybellied Green Woodpecker, Picus squamatus were numerous and extremely noisy. The Small Yellownaped Woodpecker, Picus chlorophus, and the Blacknaped Green Woodpecker, Picus canus, were seen once and twice respectively. The latter breeds in Ranikhet as I had seen it there in summer as well.

The Redrumped Swallows, Hirundo daurica, were wheeling about on most days and they called frequently.

Only the Rufousbacked Shrike, Lanius schach, was seen on two visits to Bhatrojkhan.

The drongo was conspicuous by its absence and a single Gray Drongo, Dicrurus leucophaeus, once flew past our hotel. Common mynas were present in small pockets.

The Blackthroated Jay, Garrulus lanceolatus, was one of the commonest and boldest birds at this season. Every morning it came to feed on acorns of the Himalayan Oak trees in the compound of West View Hotel. It was wonderful to watch them patiently pick at the acorn, peel the thick outer skin and feed on the meat. Once a jay dropped a large black spider 4 feet away from me. It flew down, picked up the spider, flew back to the tree, pulled out the long black legs and ate them, then swallowed the body. Often two or three of them hopped on the ground quite close to me in search of fallen acorns. Several times I watched them drink water (dew ?) from the open rain pipes along the roof of the hotel.

The Redbilled Blue Magpies, Kitta erythrorhyncha, were equally bold and numerous. They came to manure heaps under these oak trees, and were seen to carry acorns in their bills and once I watched several of them feeding noisily on a carcass of a small animal.

The Indian Tree Pie was only seen at Almora. The Shortbilled Minivet, Pericrocotus brevirostris, was fairly common. On several occasions the male came to the oak trees in the hotel compound where sometimes one perched hardly eight feet away from me.

The Whitechecked Bulbul, Pycnonotus leucogenys, which is a very bold and friendly bird in Kashmir in summer was only seen on flowering wild cherry trees and the fruitladen bushes. The Redvented Bulbul was present at Bhatrojkhan (5200 ft.) and the Black Bulbul Hypsipetes madagascariensis, was seen occasionally.

One evening a Rustychecked Scimitar Babbler, Pomatorhinus erythro-  
genys, was calling from a tree top. At Naini Tal in June I had watched these birds fly up to roost in trees from where they called in the early mornings.

The Streaked Laughing Thrush, Garrulax striatus, and the Himalayan Whistling Thrush were as much in evidence as in the summer.

The beautiful Blackheaded Sibia, Heterophasia capistrata, was seen to drink honey from the wild cherry trees. They had a peculiar whistling call at this time.

I was lucky to see three new flycatchers though I could not identify one of them. The Orangegorgetted Flycatcher, Muscicapa strophciata, and the Yellowbellied Flycatcher, Rhipidura hypoxantha, were only seen in the second week of November together with the Orange-flanked Bush Robin. The unknown flycatcher was a little smaller than the Orangegorgetted flycatcher, uniformly sooty on head, upperparts, wings, tail and breast; the rest of the underparts were white, and a white band ran through the wings. The sides of the face, chin, throat and bend of wing were black. Its colouring was the same as that of the male Magpie Robin, only the flycatcher was sooty where the robin was black except in the face, chin, and throat. It had a very straight stance and it was a very active little flycatcher flying fairly high up into the air and hovering often. There were two of them.

There were at least two species of Phylloscopus. I was certain about Phylloscopus proregulus, Pallas's Leaf Warbler, with a bright yellow rump which I saw at Bhatrojkhan. The other Phylloscopus was extremely numerous. In size it was about the Greyheaded Flycatcher Warbler, olive above; chin throat, breast pale grey, belly and vent yellow. A prominent yellowish supercilium, a whitish ring round the eyes, grey cheeks, double wing bar but only one of them prominent. It was very active, and hovered frequently showing a pale yellowish green rump. The Greyheaded Flycatcher Warbler, Seicercus xanthoschistos was also present in small numbers.

The Orange-flanked Bush Robin of which I had only seen the male in Gulmarg in June was seen in shady areas near small bushes and shrubs. The female was feeding on the black viburnum berries. A solitary male Dark Grey Bushchat sat on a wire at Almora. Three Grey-winged Blackbirds, Turdus bouboul, two male and one female were feeding busily on berries at Chaubatia about 4 miles from Ranikhet.

At Bhatrojkhan I saw my first accentor, the Rufous-breasted Accentor on November 16. A group were feeding on a harvested terraced field, and at my approach took shelter immediately in the May bushes bordering the field, but they were not very shy and appeared again when they thought they were not being watched. On my previous visits to Ranikhet in June, the only tit present was the Grey Tit, but in autumn only single birds were seen occasionally. Surprisingly, the Red-headed Tit, Aegithalos concinnus, the Green-backed Tit; Parus monticolus, and the Yellow-checked Tit, Parus xanthogenys, were present in some numbers. I was very lucky to see the Yellow-browed Tit, Parus modestus. This is a small greenish bird with a whitish ring round its eyes and Leaf Warbler-like habits from which it can be distinguished by the short tit-like bill. The yellow brow was not visible and I believe becomes prominent when the bird displays or is alarmed. Nothing much is known about its habits or nidification. Single birds were noted with other tits but once two birds were in the same tree. The call was a loud chee. One was seen chasing a Leaf Warbler. The Chestnut or Cinamon-bellied Nuthatches, Sitta castanea, were resident and numerous though towards the end of our stay there were fewer birds. The males were quite pugnacious chasing one another. Once a male threatened another with its mouth wide open and the tail half fanned out. The Himalayan Tree Creeper was also abundantly seen. On our way to Kausani, 54 miles from Ranikhet, I twice saw a wall creeper, Tichodroma moraria, fly across the road.

The highlight of my birdwatching at Ranikhet was the sight of Aethopyga nipalensis, Blyth's Yellowbacked Sunbird. It had brilliant metallic green head and long painted tail; the back dark olive grey with a bright yellow rump. A thin maroon band below the nape was only visible in bright sunlight. The under was golden orange paling to yellow on the vent. The call was weench which is easy to remember. The male had a weak little Nothing is known about the status and nidification of this sunbird.

The White-eye, like many other birds came quite often to the cherry flowers. The Cinammon Tree Sparrows were ubiquitous. Lonchura punctulata or Spotted Munia were seen at Bhatrojkhana. The flock consisted of young birds with one or two adults. A flock of Himalayan Green Finch was seen only on October 25 at Ranikhet, but small flocks were seen at Bhatrojkhana three weeks later.

The Common Rose Finch, Carpodacus erythrinus, were present in small numbers at Bhatrojkhana on November 16.

A solitary male Pinkbrowed Rose Finch came only once to a wild cherry tree. The Meadow Bunting was fairly common at Bhatrojkhana on November 16.

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#### THE HILL MYNA or GRACKLE

By

Brian Bertram

[Mr. Brian Bertram is at present doing a year's field work in India, studying the social behaviour of the Indian Hill Myna. This work is being done as part of a Ph.D. thesis at the Sub-Department of Animal Behaviour in Cambridge, England, and is being carried out under the guidance of Dr. Salim Ali and under the sponsorship of the Bombay Natural History Society. He describes here the context in which this study is being done; we hope at a later date to give a report of his findings -- Ed.]

The Hill Myna or Grackle (Gracula religiosa) is a forest bird distributed patchily over India and SE. Asia, but it is widely known and kept as a cage bird in many countries of the world. This is on account not of its appearance, which somewhat ugly, nor of its habits, which are messy, but is due to its extraordinary ability to imitate a wide variety of sounds, reproducing them with amazing accuracy. The noises imitated may be of animate origin, such as birds singing, dogs barking, or human speech, sneezing, coughing, or whistling, etc.; or they may be of inanimate origin such as the squeaking of chairs or the ringing of bells. The Hill Myna's ability to imitate sounds is rivalled only by some of the parrots. But there is no good evidence that either Hill Mynas or Parrots ever use this remarkable imitative ability in the wild state; my purpose is to discover whether or not wild Hill Mynas display these great powers of imitation. I predict that the answer to this question is almost certainly 'Yes' is not to explain away the problem but to lead on four further questions of "What do they imitate?, When do they learn their repertoire?, Why do they imitate?, and How do they imitate?". I will briefly discuss each of these four questions.

1. What do they imitate?

Birds vary considerably in the way in which they acquire their species-specific songs, as has been shown particularly by Professor Thorpe. Doves' songs are apparently entirely innate; that is to say that a male dove will produce the song characteristic of its species regardless of the way in which it is reared; a young dove does not need to hear an adult male of its own species in order to develop its own song. Dove song is thus fixed genetically, as if for example the plumage pattern.

Thorpe's experiments isolating young Chaffinches have shown that these have both an innate and a learnt component of their song. If young Chaffinches are prevented from hearing an adult male Chaffinch singing, then the song of these young birds is extremely simple; this simple inborn song they normally elaborate by hearing adult birds singing the proper Chaffinch song.

In the Hill Myna, the song appears to be almost entirely learnt -- at least, Hill Mynas in captivity seem to show virtually no common pattern in the sounds they make. If these sounds are learnt it is probably by imitation, and it seems likely that in the wild state young Hill Mynas acquire their repertoire of sounds by imitating the noises made by adult Hill Mynas. So to this extent wild Hill Mynas probably do use their powers of imitation; all this remains to be proven. The question of whether and how much Hill Mynas imitate the notes of other species in the wild state is still to be determined.

2. When do they learn their repertoire?

The Chaffinches referred to above are only able to learn their song during the first 14 months of their life; if for any reason they have not acquired the full characteristic song by this age, then they will never acquire it. There is thus a sensitive period of learning during early life, and the presence of this sensitive period suggests that song learning in these birds is an aspect of the wider subject of 'imprinting', studied intensively in young birds of precocial species. Hill Mynas appear to learn to imitate much better when young than when adult, and Dr. Salim Ali has suggested that the different age of capture is responsible for the widespread belief in the superiority of the northern over the southern race of the Hill Myna as a talking bird. This too awaits investigation.

3. Why do they imitate?

If Hill Mynas are found to imitate other species of birds in the wild state, why do they do so? This is an extremely difficult question to answer, particularly as it is still a hypothetical one. What is the evolutionary advantage in imitating the songs of other species of birds?; and are these other species deceived?; and other birds of the same species deceived?; or is this imitation perhaps just play, or perhaps just a side effect of a general ability to learn?; or what? I hope to be able at the end of my work to suggest answers to some of these questions.

4. How do they imitate?

The vocal organs of birds are very little known; it may be that much of the range of the Hill Myna's imitative ability is due to possible possession of particularly elaborate vocal organs; they have not been sufficiently studied as yet. But this is not the whole story, as is shown by the fact that Chimpanzees, which have

vocal organs almost identical to those of Man, are apparently quite incapable of vocal imitation: differences in brain structure are believed to account for this. But the brains of birds are not yet sufficiently understood; we cannot yet tell whether there are common structural features present in those bird species capable of vocal imitation and absent in other species.

There are enough problems in this whole study for at least a lifetime's work.

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### BEHAVIOUR OF A CAPTIVE GREAT HORNBILL

By

K.K. Neelakantan

On 16.1.1966 I paid a visit to the local zoo hoping to spend a couple of hours watching 'wild' birds, particularly some unfamiliar migrants which I expected to find in the bushes and trees which give the Zoo its special charm. But, though I did find a Blacknaped Oriole, I found myself spending more time observing the antics of the lone male Great Hornbill that was acquired by the Zoo some time last year.

The bird was in a cage some 8 ft. x 10 ft. and had been provided with a rusty iron bar to perch upon. The floor was covered with coarse sand mixed with some gravel. I found the bird repeatedly jumping down from the perch to the sandy floor two feet below it, keeping its wings open and laid flat on the ground, running its open bill through the sand. It took in a mouthful of sand, raised its head and let almost all the sand dribble away. Then, raising its body, it took hold of one of the flight-feathers of a wing and swiftly combed it with the bill. Then it leaped back to the perch, spent a few seconds there and again jumped to the floor to run through the whole routine. I watched the bird for more than ten minutes, and during this period it must have repeated the performance at least ten times. Some times the bird scooped up the sand, let it fall and 'wiped' its wing feathers with the bill three or four times before returning to the perch. On a few occasions it kept the wing closed while pretending to eat the sand. Once a large stone, about the size of a lemon, got between the mandibles and the bird at once raised its head, opened the bill wider and let the stone fall off.

I wonder whether the bird was indulging in a form of 'anting', for its behaviour suggested the sort of nervous excitement associated with this phenomenon. If it was a form of 'anting', it must be a habit acquired by the bird in captivity as it is not at all likely that a wild Great Hornbill will come down to the ground for such a purpose. It would be interesting to know whether William, the Great Hornbill who lived in the Bombay Natural History Society's office for nearly 30 years ever showed a tendency to 'ant'.

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BIRDLIFE AND THE DROUGHT IN MYSORE STATE

By

G.V.R. Friend

I thought the drought we are going through would bring some unusual movements of birds and the following may interest you. To begin with normally the Chikmagalur tank which when full at this time of year is about 60 to 70 acres in extent, this year for the last two months has been about 5 acres in extent with water only a few inches deep. Usually it is full of duck but this season only a few spotbill, pintail, and garganey teal have been seen, and on one occasion seven nukhta were seen. The main new visitors have been the Blackwinged Stilt (Himantopus himantopus) since September 29 and are still there although water covers only an acre now, for most of the time there have been from 50 to 100 of them so the feeding must have suited them. Another bird to turn up in great numbers was the Little Ringed Plover (Charadrius dubius), at times there must have been up to 50 feeding on the damp mudflats, when alarmed they seem to join up into a fair sized flock and have a great turn of speed and turn or land at great speed also.

Other unusual visitors have been 7 Black Ibis but they stayed only two days. Spoonbills have come occasionally usually 7 or 8 but once 22 were seen. On December 23 and 24 six Redshanks were seen and I wish they had stopped longer; they seem to stay very close together when feeding, and their movements are very quick.

Two Ruddy Sheldrake or Brahminy Duck were seen on November 11th and were seen off and on till December 3. One I am sorry to say was shot by lads who were really after the Stilts!! But they were very foolish birds and paddled about very near the road passing over the bund; three times I and a friend put them up so that they went a little further away. They are decidedly uncommon in these parts, I found no one who had seen them before and Phythian-Adams in his notes on birds shot around Mysore City notes only one in all the years he was there (see J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc., 1940).

Also on this tank were the Little Stint, Sandpipers, but I can never differentiate one from the other, but they were not in any very great numbers.

In normal years the stork tribe usually make an appearance in small numbers particularly the Openbilled Stork but they have not been seen this year, no doubt conditions are not favourable for their type of food?

On account of the failure of the SW. and NE. monsoons "hot weather conditions" set in early in November, grass was brown and the temperature much higher than normal for the time of year. This no doubt made a difference to the insect world so that the number of wagtails, rollers, bee-eaters, decreased; then after some rain towards the end of November and early December they returned for a short period but now things are drying up again they have decreased. I think they probably only move on into the Malnad proper where in the forests the insect life can survive better than in the 'Maidan' country?

Under normal climatic conditions we should not get rain till March-April, thunder showers that will give green grass once again for the cattle and may give enough water to cover the beds of the tanks but before they can fill up properly will not be before the end of

June and more likely July? Pity the poor Ryot who deserves all the sympathy the townsfolk can give him; it is not his fault there is a shortage of food!

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Review

BIRDS OF HEATH AND MARSHLAND, and BIRDS OF FIELD AND FOREST. Illustrations by S. Demartini. Text by O. Stepanek. Trans. by A. Denesova. London 1965. Spring Books.

We are by now accustomed to see magnificently produced and illustrated bird books which seem to show that the painting and printing of bird pictures has reached the ultimate perfection. The two volumes under review have been printed in Czechoslovakia presumably because of printing costs. The quality of the paper, the reproduction of the coloured paintings, and the typography are all superb.

Both the books are largish, but not too big to stand upright in a bookcase. Each volume is more than an inch thick, although there are not more than about 130 pages. There is a full-page illustration of one species on every page, facing a page of text which describes the bird. The paintings are clear and accurate, placed on the flat white ground of the page, and without any distracting "environment". Mr. Demartini's style of painting birds gives them a very realistic soft-feathered texture, so that one can almost feel the bird's warm body.

The first volume, BIRDS OF FIELD AND FOREST describes most of the commoner passerines of Europe while the second describes what the author calls "game birds" in which he includes all the species which could possibly be included under that title. The short descriptions which accompany each painting are businesslike but the author's inner feelings are revealed in the long introduction to each volume. The introduction is heavily slanted for the author is shown to be a passionate conservationist anxious to protect birds from the gun as well as from thoughtless people who destroy habitats and nesting sites. We cannot have too much of this kind of publicity in India, and if the books were not worth possessing for any other reason, they would be worth having for the genuine love and affection which the author so obviously bears for his subjects.

(L.F.)

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE BIRDWATCHERS' FIELD CLUB OF INDIA

The Annual General Meeting of the Birdwatchers' Field Club of India was held at the residence of Mr. Zafar Futchally, Juhu Lane, Andheri, at 5.00 p.m. on 15th January 1966.

The following were present:

Dr. Salim Ali  
Dr. A.K. Joshee  
Mrs. K. Sethi  
Mrs. M. Choksi  
Mr. V. Udaya Shankar Rao  
Mr. M. Sethna  
Mr. R.M. Sett  
Mr. J.M. Sett  
Mr. S.V. Nilakanta  
Mrs. L. Nilakanta

Mr. B.A. Palkhiwalla  
Capt. M.P. Bhandarkar  
Miss Shama Futchally  
Mrs. L. Futchally  
Mrs. M.P. Bhandarkar  
Mr. O. Nilsson  
Mrs. Sylvia Nilsson  
Mr. Ved Sethi  
Mr. Zafar Futchally  
Mr. J.S. Serrao ... 11

PROCEEDINGS

1. Dr. Salim Ali was elected Chairman of the meeting.
2. The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, circulated with Newsletter of January 1965, were read and confirmed.
3. The Hon. Secretary gave a general report about the work of the Club during 1965. He said that the number of contributors to the Newsletter was increasing, and read out the following list of the persons, who had sent in articles, reviews, or letters for publication.

Rev. A. Navarro, S.J.	Mr. D.A. Holmes
Mr. Joseph George	Mr. Uday Shankar Rao
Mr. Amin Tyabji	Master V. Ravi
Mr. S.V. Nilakanta	Mr. J.S. Serrao
Dr. N.W. Cusa	Dr. Miss A. Iani
Mr. S.D. Jayakar	Mr. S.K. Reeves
Mr. R.A.S. Melliush	Mrs. Jamal Ara
Miss Phyllis Barclay Smith	Miss Miriam Brown
Mr. V.N. Kelkar	Mr. Nissim Ezikiel
Mr. J.O. Wright	Mrs. Usha Ganguli
Mr. J.N. McKilvie	Mr. S.S. Saha
Mrs. Lacey Futchally	Mr. W.D.C. Erskine-Crum
Major A. David	Mr. L.A. Hill
Prof. K.K. Neelakantan	Capt. J.C. Mahanti
Mr. R.N. Chatterjee	Mr. Nandan Nilakanta
Mr. K. Nanu Nair	Mr. T.J. Roberts
Mr. E.K. Mahavan	Mrs. Maureen Thom
Mr. Zafar Futehally	Dr. H. Spurway
Mr. T.V. Jose	Mrs. J.D. Thom
Dr. R.L. Fleming	Mr. E.W. Ramble
Mr. Kameshwar Pal Singh	R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji
Mrs. Leela Nilakanta	Mr. Pratap Singh
K.S. Lavkumar	Mr. P.W. Soman

Vital statistics: 46 contributors; foreigners: 16; more than one contribution : 16

It was noted that 16 of these had sent in more than one contribution, indicating their serious interest in the Newsletter. Out of the 46 contributors, 16 were Englishmen and women, who continued to be the keenest subscribers.

The Honorary Secretary requested members to send in more reviews and extracts of articles from other natural history journals. It was necessary to publish more facts about the ornithological work being carried out in the various parts of the world, and this would only be possible if members sent in information of this type.

Regarding the expenditure from the break up of accounts submitted it was noted that the total expense for the year was Rs 2,183. The number of copies sent out monthly varied to a certain extent, and in December 1965, 375 copies were sent. Since there were only about 200 members who had subscribed, there was a deficit of about Rs 1000/- which the Hon. Secretary agreed to meet.

It was, however, decided that during the current year, the complimentary list would be cut down, so that there was a small deficit, and every attempt would be made to collect subscription from everyone receiving the Newsletter.

The total amount in the current account opened for the Newsletter was Rs496.79 on 14.1.1966.

It was decided that no separate office bearers of the Club were necessary, and the members of the Editorial Board of the Newsletter could act as Regional Secretaries for their respective areas. Mrs. L. Nilakanta and Mr. Zafar Futchally were respectively elected as Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary of the Club. Dr. Salim Ali was elected as Chairman.

The following were elected as members of the Editorial Board of the Newsletter for Birdwatchers.

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| 1. Dr. Salim Ali, D.Sc., F.N.I.<br>33 Pali Hill, Bombay 50                   | 2. K.S. Lavkumar<br>Rajkumar College, Rajkot                                       |
| 3. Capt. N.S. Tyabji<br>Gujarat Refinery Project Camp<br>Baroda              | 4. Mrs. Usha Ganguli<br>10 Cavalry Lines<br>Delhi 7                                |
| 5. Mrs. Jamal Ara<br>North Office Para, Doranda<br>Hinoo P.O., Ranchi, Bihar | 6. Dr. Biswanoy Biswas<br>Indian Museum,<br>Zoological Survey of India<br>Calcutta |
| 7. Prof. K.K. Neelakantan<br>University College<br>Trivandrum, Kerala        | 8. Mr. R.A.S. Melliush<br>Oxford University Press<br>Mount Road, Madras            |
| 9. Capt. M.P. Bhandarkar<br>Santacruz, Bombay                                | 10. Mr. Zafar Futchally<br>Editor<br>Juhu Lane, Andheri<br>Bombay 58               |

The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Mushroom and the Bulbul

Some time back I reported in the Newsletter that bulbuls at Tambaram eat the petals of certain flowers. This time I have something more interesting to report. During the third week of November, I saw a Whitebrowed Bulbul flying from the ground with an orange coloured substance in its beak. On closer examination I found a group of mushrooms at the precise spot from which the bird had flown away. A few bits were missing from these mushrooms and it is most likely that the bulbul was interrupted while eating the mushrooms. The mushroom is golden yellow or orangish in colour and has a funnel-shaped cap. It belongs to the genus Cantharellus all the species of which are said to be 'edible'. Swanton in his FUNGI AND HOW TO KNOW THEM lists several insects, slugs, snails and several mammals as feeding on mushrooms. Birds however are not included in the list. On the other hand, he points out that birds which eat these insects and snails, indirectly assist in the distribution of the spores of the mushrooms, thereby introducing the Continental species of mushrooms into Britain.

Gift Siromony  
Madras Christian College  
Tambaram, Madras 59

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Zafar Futchally  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers  
32-A Juhu Lane  
Andheri, Bombay 58